

¶ The Argument vpon the Epistle of S. Paule to Philemon: by Erasmus of Roterodame▪

**T** His Philemon (after the Grekes writing) was a Phrygi• borne, whiche nacion of people is vntractable & ••any she, as the Greekes owne prouerbe maketh often mencion: Stripes make the Phrygian to amende. And yet Paul reconned this Philemon one of hys speciall frendes, by|cause of his godlynes & diligence done to y• sayntes. And a seruaunt of his one Onesimus had runne away frō him to Rome, and had theuishlye stollen somewhat from him, as seruauntes are for the moste parte vsed to doe. There whan he had hearde Paule, who at that tyme was in bondes, he receiued the doctrine of the gospel, and serued Paule in prison. But lest the maister should be vexed in his mynde for his seruauntes runnyng awaye, he sendeth him home agayne & with a wonderfull diligence and ciuilitie, he reconsileth vnto the Maister his seruaunt that had bene both a runneagate and a piker, and offreth him selfe to be suertie to make good what soeuer he had piked at his runnyng awaye. This Epistle he wrote from the prison by the sayd Onesimus whom he also calleth his sonne.

Thus endeth the Argument.

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Page xxxii

¶ The paraphrase of Erasmus vpon the Epistle of S. Paule to Philemon.

¶ The .i. Chapter.

The texte.

Paule the prysoner of Christe & brother Timothee. Vnto Philemon the beloued, and oute helper, and to the beloued Appia, and to Archippus oure felowe souldier, and to the congregacion that is of thy house. Grace be vnto you and peace from God oure father, & from the Lorde Iesus Christe.

**P** Aule before this tyme an Apostle and seruaunte of Iesu Christ and now he his prysoner also: for why shoulde not I be glad to be hys prysoner, for whose ghospelles sake I weare these bondes? not for the punyshment of any euyl that I haue done, but as a notable badge of a free & valleaunt preacher: and also my felowe ghospellpreacher, brother Timothee, vnto Philemon in the profession of the commune faith a brother, singularly worthy to be beloued: and not a brother onely but also my companion in very many affaires & partaker in the office of the

gospel: & to his wyfe Appia, my moste welbeloued syster as concernyng the kynred of fayth: & to Archippus our felowe souldier and to the rest of the congregacion whiche is at his house: Grace be vnto you and peace from God oure cōmune father & frō his sonne the lord Iesu Christ.

The texte.

I thanke my god, making menciō alwayes of the in my prayers, when I heare of thy loue and fayth, whiche thou haste towarde the Lorde Iesu, and towarde all sayntes, so that the fellowshippe of thy fayth is fruteful in the knowledge of euery good (woorke) whiche is in you towarde Iesus Christe. For we haue great ioye and consolacion in thy loue because that by thee (brother) the sayntes hertes are comforted.

In my prayers wherwith I am accustomed to sacrifice daylye vnto God, I undre thanks vnto him alwayes on thy behalfe. For I ascribe it thankfully vnto him, that I heare spoken openly of all men, that is to say, both the purenesse, & thy ryght gospelling charitie which y<sup>u</sup> bearest towardes the lord Iesus: & not towardes hym only, but also towardes al saintes, y<sup>•</sup> is to were, his mēbres vnto whō what so euer is bestowed, hys wyl is to reckē it done to him self. And this I also beseche him, to augment his mercifulnes vpon thee, & that this thy faith, whiche is not idle in the, may expresse his power dayly more & more, & to enforce the with plēteousnes to releue mo & mo, so y<sup>•</sup> there be no office of cristilan charitie but that thou maye be both acquaynted and tried in it. The thyn|ges that thou hast hitherto done already, occasion vs to conceaue a more sure confidence in thee, that we dare be bolde to reckon vpon the in maters of grea|ter weyghte. For whan I doe consider that all that Christians haue are com|•ne, I am not a little ioyous, and euen in these afflictions it was no smal cō|forte to me, that thou (o my brother) waste so ready to deserue well of al men, by ••nes of thy loue, wherwith thou haste refreshed the saintes heartes that are ••liicted with the sorowes of this worlde. For in thys thy doing thou declarest •y selfe to be a ryght brother.

The texte.

Wherefore, thoughe I myght be bolde in Christ to commuande thee, that whiche was •y dewtye to do: yet for loues sake I rather beseche the, though I be as I am, euen olde Paul, and now a prisoner of Iesu Christ. I beseche the for my sonne Onesimus whom I <◇> begotten in my bondes (whiche in tyme passed was to the vnprofytable but now, profitable both to the and to me) whom I haue sent home agayne. Thou therefore rel•ue him, that is to say, myne owne bowels, whom I woulde fayne haue retayned w<sup>t</sup>

me, that in thy steade be myght haue ministred vnto me in the bondes of the ghospell. Neuertheles, without thy mynde woulde I do nothyng, that the good which thou doest should not be as it were of necessitie, but wyllingly.

Wherefore hauyng the experience of these so many matters, whereby thou declarest thy selfe to be a true folower of Christ, I trusted excedynglye, that I myght obteyne of the what I wyll, albeit I commaunded the only, as the fa|ther his sonne, and as an Apostle his disciple, namely in a matter of it selfe in|different and agreeable to the gospels doctryne, that thou professest: whiche commaundeth, that we by experience felynge the mercye of the Lorde in forge|uyng our debte, shoulde lykewyse forgeue other, yet I had rather to obteyne this at thyne handes by charitie, than by myne autoritie: and I woulde ra|ther desire the, as one brother desyreth another, than commaunde the as a mai|ster his scholar. And thou shalt not disdayne suche a desyrour. For in what thyng canst thou saye me naye that I desyre the? yea euen I, fyrst Paule (whan I speake of Paule, I meane maters vnto the that are not small) than an olde man. And muche is wonte to be graunted to a man for his age sake. But thys geare is no nouelties to thee. And nowe also a prisoner. And in makyng of de|syres euen the miserie of the besecher hath no small weight. Last of al, I am the prysoner of Christe Iesu. And to suche a prisoner all ought to beare their fa|uour that professe the doctrine of Christe. To a man that desyreth by so manye wayes thou couldest not saye nay, althoughe he shoulde entreate the for anye man. But nowe I entreate thee for my sonne, whom I loue so muche the more renderly, that I begate him not vnto Moses, but vnto Christ, not to the world but to the ghospell: yea and I begate hym in my bondes nowe whan I shall shortly goe out of this worlde. For parentes are wonte to loue their chyldren more inwardely, whom they begate in their extreme olde age. This is euen Onesimus, that in tymes past whan he had robbed his mayster tunne a waye frome hym, litell agreeably to hys owne name, that is to wete, profytable and trustie, nowe is cleane chaunged into an other sort, and shal not only be trusly for thy profyte hereafter, but also he was profytable to me wyth hys seruyce in pryson. Therefore I sende him to the home agayne, for nowe he is become an o|ther man. And yf thou be the man, that I trust thou art: and yf olde Paule the prisoners commendacion standeth of any effecte with the, thou shall receyue Onesimus, not nowe as a runneagate seruaunt, but as the thynges that I s•• moost stoore by, and my syngularly welbeloued sonne. It is agaynst my wyll that I sende him home agayne. For I had rather kepe him styll with me, if it were but for this cause, that he should represent thee vnto me in these bondes. For I doubt not, but inasmuche as thou shewest so muche charitie towards all others for the gospels sake, thou woldest in case thou were here, minis•• also to me in these bondes, where with I am tyed for the gospels sake. But nowe he is founde vnsought for, by whom thou mayest ministre vnto me belyng absent thy selfe. Howbeit I woulde do nothing without thyne aduise, •• yf in vsyng myne autoritie I shoulde do it vpon myne owne head, although thou

wouldest haue taken my dede in good parte, yet thy well doinge should haue the lesse commendacion, yf it semed to be ioyned with any necessitie. Not I sent him home agayne, so as it maye be in thy choyse eyther to kepe hym●●●● with the, or to sende him to me agayne. Yf thou sende him agayne, thy doinge shall haue so muche the more prayse, in that it is not enforced but freely do●●

and of thyne owne mynde.

The texte.

For happly he therfore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receaue him for euer, not now as a seruaunt: but aboue a seruasit, euen a brother beloued, specially to me: but how much more vnto the, both in y<sup>•</sup> fleshe, & also in y<sup>•</sup> lord? If y<sup>•</sup> coūte me therfore a fellow, receaue hym as my selfe. If he haue done the any hurt, or oweth the oughte, y<sup>•</sup> laye to my charge, (I Paul haue writtē it w<sup>t</sup> mine own hand) I wyl tecōpence it. So y<sup>•</sup> I do not say to the, how y<sup>•</sup> thou owest vnto me euen th<sup>•</sup>ne own selfe also. Euē so (brother) let me enioy the in y<sup>•</sup> lord. Cōfort my bowels in the lord. Trusting in thyn obedience, I wrot vnto the, knowyng y<sup>•</sup> thou wylt also do more thē I say. Moreouer, prepare me lodging: for I trust y<sup>•</sup> thorow the helpe of your praye●s, I shalbe geuen vnto you. Ther salute the, Epaphras my felowe prysoner in Christ Iesu, Marcus, Atistarcus, Demas, Lucas, my helpers. The grace of our Lorde Iesu Christe be with your spirite. Amen.

Doe not thynke vpon his runnyng awaye. He hath recompensed the fault of his s<sup>•</sup>eing with his wel doyng, he hath washed it away by baptisme, he hath done it away w<sup>t</sup> teares. And how wootest y<sup>u</sup> whether it come so to passeby y<sup>e</sup> dispensacion of Gods prouidence, y<sup>•</sup> his fault might turne to good both to vs & to him? The iudgemētes of god be secret. Perchaunce he was for this purpose talken away frō thee for a season, y<sup>t</sup> for a seruaūt being but for a season (for bonde seruice endurethe no longer than for terme of lyfe) thou mightest receyue him for euer. It is for euer whatsoeuer the gospel bringeth forth, & that y<sup>u</sup> shouldest receiue him againe now not as a bond seruaūt but as a most dere brother. Truely vnto me that am an Apostle, he is bothe a brother and most derely beloued brother, for the commune faithes sake, which maketh vs elike in Christ: for the commune enheritaunce sake, wherunto we are called indifferently elike: for the commune fathers sake, for the commune redemers sake, in whiche all there is no difference betwene the lorde and the seruaunt,

betwene the maister and the scholar. And yf he for these causes be vnto me most dearely beloued, w<sup>t</sup> whome I haue nothyng commune sauynge the kynred of the spirit, how much more ought he to be most dearely beloued vnto the, vnto whom besydes the bōldes of the spirit, he is also ioyned after y<sup>r</sup> fleshe? Thou wouldest loue a straūlgier, if thou seest him become suche a one as Onesimus is. But nowe thou shalte loue him for this respecte that where he is of thine owne householde, he is proued suche a one as he is. And yf thou vouchesafe to haue me to be thy cōlpanion in the ghospels affaires, thou must take him agayne as it were I my selfe. For I loue him as my most deare sonne, as my highly beloued brother, & as partaker of my bondes and of the ghospell. Other thou must cast of both or hertyly loue both. What he hath bene afore tyme, it besemeth not to reherse after he is baptised. Suppose him to be a newe man newly borne agayne vnto the. But if the losse of any thing greue the, wherof thou woldest haue amēdes, before thou forgeue hym take me suertye for him. Requyre it of me, whatsoeuer he hath eyther hurt thee or oweth thee. I bynde my fidelitie vnto the by this my hande writynge. Loe thou haste this Epistle written with my verye owne hande. Yf thou thinke me a trustye suertie, leate Onesimus alone, goe to lawe with me, I shal paye the agayne in his behalfe, whatsoeuer he oweth the. Thus muche I coulde obteyne (I thinke) yf I had to do with any other man. I am not disposed to reherse at this preset, what I might iustly require of the by myne owne autoritie. For I wyl not make rehersall here, that inasmuch as thou arte become a christian man by my doctrine, thou owest me not only that that thyne is, but also thine owne selfe. Muche lesse wrong thou oughtest, to

[Page \[unnumbered\]](#)

reken it, yf I woulde require the to forgyue me, what soeuer losse it be that Onesimus oweth thee, howbeit I desyre not that, onles thou wilte wyllingly and of thyne owne mynde forgeue it, not so muche to set my promise at libertie, as that thou shouldest declare thy charitie. Wel goe to: my brother Onesimus hath his name of fruition, who, lyke as I loue hym derely, and as I woulde with al myne hert haue him praysed vnto the, so let it be my chaunce to haue y<sup>r</sup> fruicion of thee, not after the maner as among the commune people, a frend is glad of his frende, but so as an Apostle is ioyous of his disciple that expresseth the doctrine of Christ. Thou seest how hartely I loue Onesimus, and he hath wel deserued that I should loue him. Therfore receyue hym, & make my herte mery. Herein I trouble the with to muche a doe, not that I put any distrust in thy charitie, but I do it vpona certaine abundaunce of loue that I beare vnto my sonne. For in dede, I knowe thyne obedience so throughlye▪ well by thyne olde diligent doinges, that I doubt not but thou wilte doe more in this behalfe than I require of the. And in the meane whyle receyue Onesimus gentlie

euē as my pledge, and also prepare me lodgyng agaynst I come whiche shall not be long after. For I trust that God throughe your prayers wil once restore me agayne vnto you. And than I shall presently thanke the for thy gentill recey|uyng of Onesimus. Epaphras thy countreyman saluteth thee, whiche is my felow in pryson and in bondes, for Christ Iesus sake. Moreouer Marcus Aristarchus, Demas, & Lucas my felowes in office. And imagine that they all beseche the for Onesimus as I doe. The grace of oure Lorde Iesus Christ be alwayes wyth your spirite:

Amen.

¶ Thus endeth the Paraphrase vpon the Epistle to Philemon.